

FKNMS Large Ship Working Group
October Meeting Followup
Fritz Wettstein
November 12, 2002

Introduction:

These are my thoughts on digesting the October 24th, 2002 meeting of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Large Ship Working Group Meeting. I have not consulted the meeting minutes taken by Fiona. We should probably have a debriefing soon. I am available Nov. 14th afternoon, Nov. 15th afternoon, Nov. 18th all day, Nov. 19th 4pm or Nov. 26th all day.

Meeting Summary:

Overall, the meeting went well, pouring a foundation on which consensus can be built. Time will tell how well the concrete sets. Ground rules, quarterly meeting frequency, holding meetings at FKCC and working group participation were addressed. Folks had a chance to hear what it is all about, meet other members and hear some of where everybody's coming from. A plan of attack was hatched, giving the group unity of mission "Let's bring in some experts to see if we can validate folks concerns." My hope is that what we don't have is a unity of opinion: "The other guy is misinformed. Bringing in experts will show that I am right." But we'll work thru that.

We heard and recorded interests and concerns, and then categorized them as: turbidity; vessel discharges; vessel traffic. The economic and environmental effects related to these issues was seen as overarching. Certain aspects of a box within which discussions will focus were defined, including an exclusion of upland tourism/development related issues and a definition of large ships as being 50 meters or greater.

Unresolved:

There were two apparently unresolved issues. The first relating to how we approach the issue and the second with how to deal with economic issues. There was a chicken versus egg discussion about how to define the problem. Do we first look at cruise ship operations to see how they avoid, minimize or mitigate environmental impacts or first look to see whether there are any impacts? My preference on this question is to first look at whether a problem exists in sanctuary waters, then assess large ship's contributions to it.

Mention of jobs, users and economics came up repeatedly in the interests and concerns. Is this an issue or a factor to consider in the assessment of turbidity, discharge and vessel traffic concerns?

Schedule:

November 8th – work group members provide questions.

November – management team work on questions, line up presenters for next meeting.

Early/Mid December – questions re-circulated to working group for comments, additional questions.

January 30th – next meeting (tentative).

Progress:

To date I have received written questions from Erwin Wunderlich (Corps), John Dolan-Heitlinger (Chamber), Dan Probert (Key West Port Advisory Board) and Sandra Walters (Bar Pilots). I have added questions developed by the FKNMS Ad Hoc Turbidity Working Group (April 2000). Several FKNMS Technical Advisory Council members have been contacted for assistance in recruiting experts. Don has been in contact with turbidity researchers from the Stevens Institute who have experience with New York harbor's contaminated sediments. Reference materials are being compiled.

Next Steps:

1. Management team work on list of questions either thru e-mail correspondence or meeting. Suggestions for assessment of list of questions.
 - a. Group questions by topic (turbidity, discharges, vessel traffic).
 - b. Throw out questions that do not “fit in the box,” if any.
 - c. Assess how the question addresses interests or concerns stated by members.
 - d. Separate questions with data driven (measurable/observable) answers from those that are policy driven.
 - e. Assess whether an answer can be formulated with available data or requires additional data collection.
2. Make sure all group members have input. Some of the folks who work on the water don’t use e-mail to communicate questions, ideas, concerns. We will need to pick up the phone and call people as well.
3. Discuss panels and recruit panelists for early winter and later presentations at FKCC.
4. Circulate round two discussion of questions.
5. Other?